English

COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS
Leadership • Advocacy • Solutions

# Myths & Facts about Homelessness



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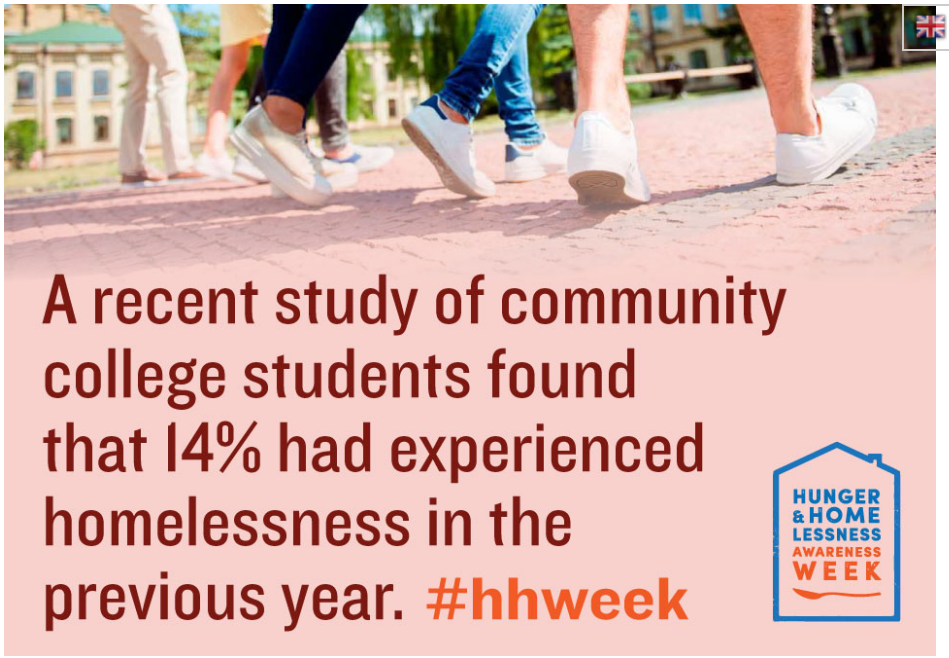
**Myth:** People who are homeless should just get a job and then they would not be homeless.

**Fact:** Many people who are homeless do have jobs, sometimes two or even three. The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates as many as 40%-60% of people experiencing homelessness nationwide are employed. However, a paycheck does not necessarily solve their homelessness or other challenges.

In Clark County, a full-time worker earning $13.50/hr. minimum wage would need to work 73 hours per week to afford a one bedroom apartment, at the fair market rent of $1,289. At 40 hours per week, a household would need to earn $28.75/hour for a two-bedroom, according to the **National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) annual 2020 Out of Reach Report.**

In addition, it is difficult to find and keep a job while living in a car, tent, shelter, or outside with no place to bathe regularly, receive mail, do laundry, and feel safe enough to focus on employment responsibilities versus daily survival.

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*Dan recently came into the Housing Solutions Center for assistance with housing after living in his car for a few weeks. He shared, "I have to work three jobs and barely sleep." He said as soon as he is close to saving enough money to get into a rental unit, his car breaks down, his belongings are stolen or another cost creeps up. He always thought being a good employee and showing up would keep him housed. Dan was recently housed through Diversion and the housing relief fund with a compassionate landlord.*

2

**Myth:** People choose to be homeless.

**Fact:** This myth is dangerous and allows us to ignore the trauma of homelessness and **neurobiological effects trauma has on humans**. Being homeless is stressful, humiliating, exhausting, and dangerous. It is a hard day-to-day existence for men, women, and children.

Some people may choose to sleep outside rather than in a

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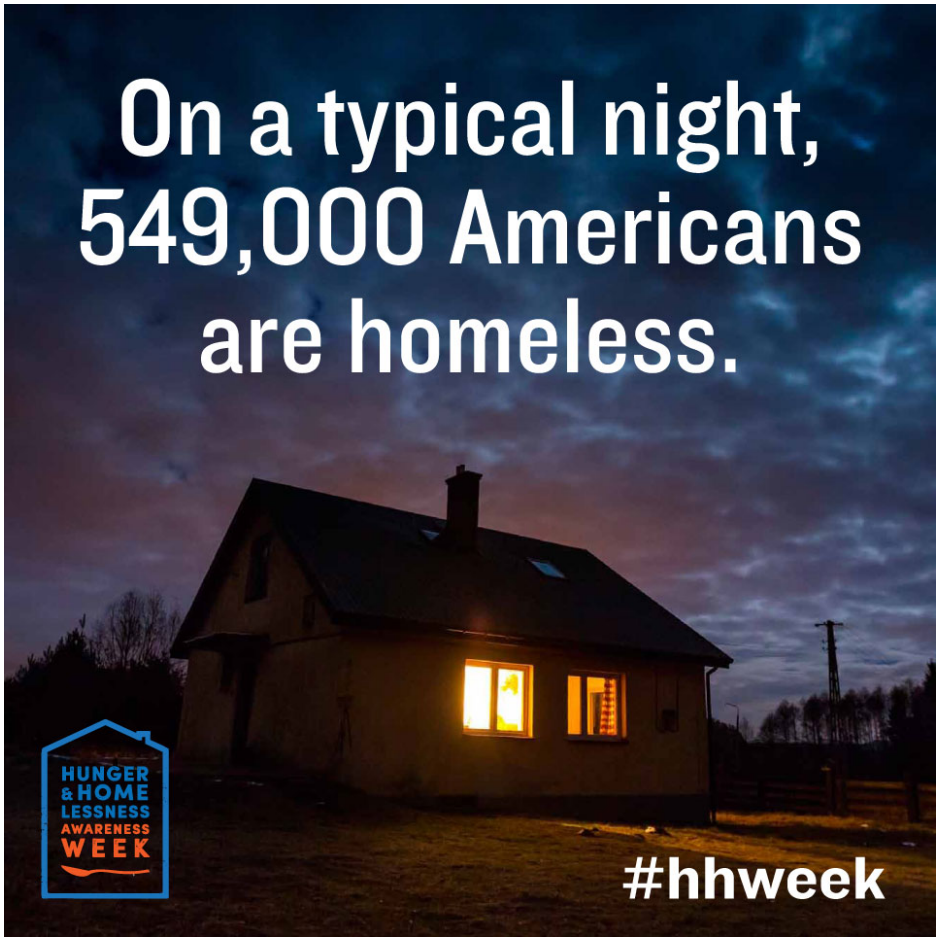
possessions outside. They also may not want to leave their community of others living outside. They may also be living with serious mental and physical health conditions with symptoms that make it difficult to have the capacity and ability to make rational decisions. In addition, some shelters and housing programs have strict criteria that potentially "screen out" the most vulnerable people.

When we take the time to engage and listen to someone's story, we often hear they are not "choosing to be homeless" but rather the other choices available are undesirable, have been tried or misunderstood. For now, their current situation is better than the alternative because they have become accustomed to living unhoused. Homelessness is traumatic and complicated and solutions are not a one-size-fits-all.



*Our friends at Outsiders Inn collect stories of people who are unhoused. You can read*

*idea of "choosing to be homeless". **CLICK HERE** to read Doug's story!*

*Thanks to Outsiders Inn for allowing us to share! Please check out their **Facebook page HERE**!*

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**Myth:** People who are homeless are dangerous, violent, and/or criminals.

**Fact:** A person who is homeless is no more likely to be a criminal than a person who is housed, with one legal exception: camping ordinances. People who are homeless break that law merely by being unhoused. The reality is that most spend their time and resources trying to survive and improve their situation.

Rather than being dangerous or lawbreakers, they are parents trying to work or find a job while they live in a car with their children. They are teens who have no supportive adults in their lives while they try to find a place to live, so they can hopefully stay in school. They are senior citizens with poor health and a fixed income struggling to get by. People who are homeless are more likely to be victims of a crime than to commit a crime. It is important that we not vilify people without homes but instead, see them as neighbors in need of shelter and best-fit assistance to help them find a home.

***Home is where a family can be themselves. From home a future becomes visible. Through the Housing Solutions Center and our partners, we help people find home. After 2 years 86% of people thrived.***

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CFTH Montage

4

**Myth:** Housing should come with conditions like being clean and sober.

**Fact:** Evidence tells us that people who are homeless can find stability and healing when provided empowering supports focused on housing and supports. Known as Housing First, this approach acknowledges the complexities of addiction, trauma, and the

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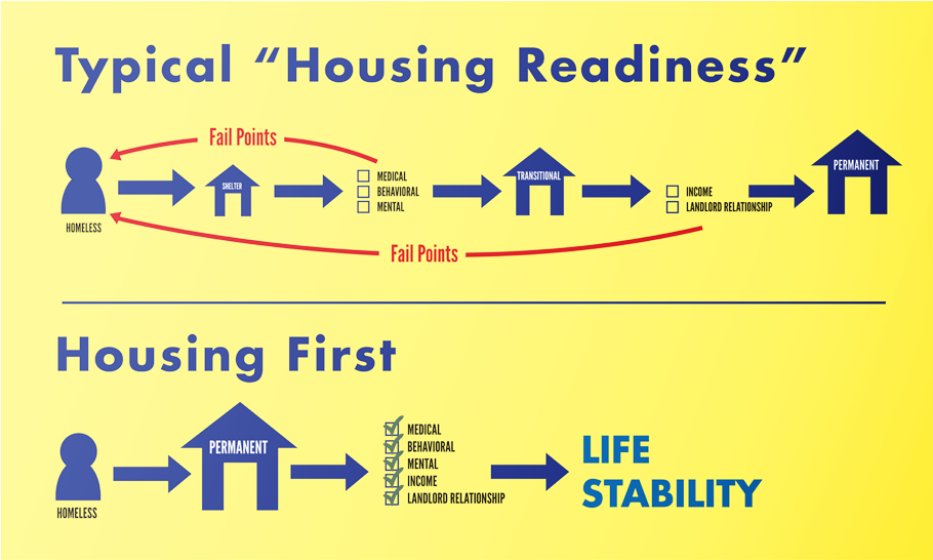
successfully address challenges while living on the streets or in an unsafe and unstable situation. Read more about the **evidence behind approaches that drive an end to homelessness**.




Housing First is an evidence-based practice used in our local homeless crisis response system. For example, all publicly funded emergency shelters focus first and foremost on reducing barriers to housing and increasing household wraparound supports. The community also has scattered site housing first permanent supportive housing, where units are rented from private landlords and the tenants are heavily engaged through case management. Over 200 of these scattered site units exist in Clark County.

*Joe, now lives in a Housing First apartment after being homeless and on the streets since he was nine years old. As a teenager he became addicted to alcohol. Alcoholism and ongoing homelessness took its toll. When Joe first came in to the Housing Solutions Center, he wore clothes that did not fit, was having a hard time meeting his basic needs and, was having a hard time imagining his life being any different. In the winter, he became even more vulnerable with frostbitten fingers creating a dangerous situation for him. Fortunately, a Housing First unit opened up soon after and he was able*

*place, HSC staff noticed for the first time how tall he was. "He was upright in clothes that fit. His fair was clean and trimmed. Best of all he was in the beginning stages of recovery from alcoholism."*

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**Myth:** There is nothing I can do about homelessness.

**Fact:** Effectively reducing homelessness will take the entire community working together around this common goal.

**Be Kind:** When those experiencing homelessness are asked what can community members to do help, the reply is resounding familiar, Simply Be kind. Kindness is a rare

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of violence and disrespect occur to people who are unhoused daily and often the act of kindness one shows, is the only sharing of humanity experienced throughout the day.

**Speak Up:** Homelessness is a complex challenge rooted in many social injustices. In order to effectively reduce homelessness we must advocate for person-centered, trauma-informed supports that meet people where they are in life.

**Share Time:** Volunteerism is vital to the sustainability of existing resources and new resources.
**Volunteer with winter and severe weather sheltering efforts.**
**Volunteer with Council for the Homeless.**
**Volunteer with other local agencies that serve people experiencing homelessness.**

homelessness are regularly in need of housing and work opportunities. Those who are unhoused are as diverse as the general public in their needs, experience, drive and skills. If you'd like to learn more about how you can help contact our **Housing Solutions Center**.

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